The SETT Framework

The I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology uses the SETT Framework to help guide us and our clients to appropriate decisions about assistive technology needed by students. The SETT Framework was developed to help school teams gather information needed to make decisions around the assistive technology needs of their students.   This framework starts by focusing on the needs of the **Student,** within specific **Environment(s)**, in order to participate in **Tasks**, which then leads to potential **Tools** which can be used within that environment, to accomplish the tasks identified by the school.

An important premise of the use of the framework is that the **Learning Team**, that is, the classroom teacher, the educational assistant, the special educator, the clinicians, the parents, and the student, are in the best position to determine what the needs of student are that might be met by the use of assistive technology. The Learning Team may then choose to work with resource centres such as the I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology to determine the best solutions to meet the child's needs. Without the full participation of the Learning Team, the decision-making process is at risk of missing some of the critical components to ensure that appropriate decisions are being made for that student.

Why do we use this Framework?
The SETT Framework helps to address concerns such as:
- What hardware and/or software is the "best" for my school to purchase. This is NOT a readily answerable question without considerable exploration.
- Ongoing problems with technology abandonment or under-utilization. Too often students who receive technology fail to use it or do not know how to use it effectively.
- Poor outcomes: Expected changes in communication, participation levels and productivity do not materialize, as expected by the classroom teacher or the Learning Team.
- Sometimes, even when the features of the technology are well matched to the needs and abilities of the student, the tools may not be environmentally useful: "It may be a great tool, but it doesn't work in OUR classroom".

How does the SETT Framework work?
1.   The SETT Framework is essentially a means to analyze what the student needs to do that he or she is not presently able to do in a particular environment. So the first thing to consider is the **STUDENT**
- What does the student need to do?
- What are the student's special needs?
- What are the student's current abilities?

Knowing the student's strengths, needs and preferences is critical to matching this information with the appropriate tools and strategies for his/her learning.

2.   Then, the team looks at the **ENVIRONMENT** in which the student needs to participate. Questions about the environment include:
- What materials and equipment are currently available in the environment?
- What is the physical arrangement? Are there special concerns?
- What is the instructional arrangement? Are there likely to be changes?
- What supports are available to the student?
- What resources are available to the people supporting the student?

For example, the answers to the last two questions alone may determine whether there is enough support for a complex tool in that environment.

3.   Next, the team needs to create a detailed analysis of the **TASK(S)** that the student needs to accomplish in that environment. Start by looking at:

- What activities occur naturally in the environment?
- What is everyone else doing?
- What activities support the student's curricular goals?
- What are the critical elements of the activities?
- How might the activities be modified to accommodate the student's special needs

This leads to the question of how technology might support the student's active participation in those activities. All of these questions are then considered before attempting to identify the features or components of the tools needed to complete these tasks.

4.   Finally, after reviewing all these factors, the team can investigate the assistive technology **TOOLS**:
- What no-tech, low-tech, or high-tech tools should be considered when developing a system for a student with these needs and abilities, doing these tasks, in these environments?
- What strategies might be used to invite increased student performance?
- How might these tools and strategies be tried out with the student in the customary environments in which they will be used?

Together, the team can create a plan to trial the suggested tools and strategies. If done well, the plan will help to evaluate the tools so that effective technology decisions can be made for the student - decisions which may range from whether to implement low-tech strategies or to evaluate a high-tech system or a combination of these options. The student's needs, in the context of the reality of their environment, lead and define the process.

Procedures used by the I CAN Centre for Assistive Technology incorporate our use of the **SETT Framework**. It is our hope that this framework will generate extensive discussion by the referring Learning Team so that, together, we can come up with solutions that meet the real needs of the student and the school, and have a meaningful impact on the student's ability to participate in learning and in life.

Resources:

The SETT Framework: www.joyzabala.com

Assistive Technology Training Online Project (ATTO), University of Buffalo.
http://atto.buffalo.edu/registered/DecisionMaking

Assistive Technology for Learning and the IPP Process, Draft, Spring 2005, Alberta Education